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The Haliburton County Huskies played a fast-paced game on Feb. 26 against the North York Rangers, ending with an impressive score of 10-2. This was the last home game of the regular season. For more photos, see inside this edition. /TIM YANO staff photographer

Flood concerns on the rise in Minden

by **EMILY STONEHOUSE**
Editor

"Mother Nature is in charge," said Mayor Bob Carter, in reference to Minden holding their breath as flood season approaches.

The township has had major floods occur in the recent years of 2013, 2017, and 2019, with a smattering of flood watches and warnings filling the years between.

Positioned along the Gull River, the spring run-off presents the risk of high water levels every time winter melts away, but this year, with accumulating snow levels, locals are feeling on-edge. The current snow depth across the county ranges between 50 to 80 centimeters, and Carter noted that if there are a series of warm days back-to-back, that could be dangerous.

"In March we will really get started on planning," said Carter, noting that township staff from multiple municipalities sit down with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF) and Parks Canada.

"Currently, there are devices used to measure the depths of the water, and devices through the forest to measure snow levels, and the water content of that snow," said the mayor.

Mike Fenn of the MNRF shared that flooding risks depend on the rate of snowmelt and weather patterns. "Parks Canada conducts most snow measurements," said Fenn. "(and they're used) to inform their dam operations strategy. The ministry continuously conducts flood risk assessments, monitors weather and water levels, and provides updates through the Flood Forecasting and Warning Program."

At their AGM two weeks ago, the Minden Community Food Centre added "flood preparation" to their agenda. "It's something

see CARTER page 2

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Ontario goes blue for third consecutive time

by **EMILY STONEHOUSE**
Editor

With Doug Ford sweeping the province blue in a historic third consecutive win for the Conservative Premier, Laurie Scott has once again secured her position as MPP for the Haliburton Kawartha Lakes Brock riding.

The 98 polls across the region closed at 9 p.m. on Feb. 27, and within minutes, the results started rolling in online.

Local voter turnout in the riding was pegged at a mere 48.91 per cent - only a slight increase from 2022's 48.14 per cent. Despite all the buzz leading up to this year's election, there still seemed to be a low interest when it came to actually casting a ballot.

At the Haliburton Legion voting site, one support staff noted a "steady stream of voters" throughout the duration of the election day. The sentiment was echoed in Minden, with election sites seemingly abuzz. Advance polls were held in Haliburton on Feb. 20 to 22, and saw a low number of voters show up, which lent to the provincial average of a mere six per cent of eligible voters utilizing the advance polling stations.

There are over 11 million eligible voters in Ontario, and just over five million cast their ballots in this snap election, totalling approximately 45.4 per cent of Ontarians. Some credit the low turnout to the poor weather conditions that smacked parts of the GTA on election day. Historically, elections are held in warmer months, in an effort to mitigate voter suppression. A provincial election has not been held in Ontario since 1981.

"I don't care who you vote for," said one voter waiting in line at the Legion on election day. "As long as you're voting for change."

While discussing votes in public still seems to be largely off the table, some locals were eager to share their thoughts. "I usually vote orange (NDP)," said one voter. "They're the only ones who care about us, and we have to keep that party alive." Others going to and from the Legion chimed in, with another sharing they had just voted Green for the first time. "Our environment has to come first," they said.

Scott secured her seventh term in the riding with a margin of 14,818 votes, totalling 26,506, according to Elections Ontario. Liberal candidate Alison Bennie came second with 11,688 (22.91 per cent), NDP's Barbara Doyle snatched third with 6,993 (13.7 per cent) and local Green Party rep Tom Regina finished fourth with 2,602 votes (5.1 per cent).

When it came to fringe candidates, New Blue's Jacquie Barker garnered 1,223 votes, Brian Kerr of the Ontario Party received 926 votes, Gene Balfour, an Independent, earned 426 votes, Libertarian Zachary Tisdale got 385 votes and Bill Denby of the Freedom Party managed 278 votes.

Scott celebrated with her supporters in Lindsay following the win, sharing that her strategy of going door-to-door as opposed to participating in candidates meetings and debates seemed beneficial.

MPP Laurie Scott secured her seventh term representing Haliburton Kawartha Lakes Brock townships on Feb. 27, 2025. /INSTAGRAM

The last time the Ontario government formed three consecutive majority governments was in 1959, with PC leader Leslie M. Frost, who hailed from Lindsay.

The buzz word for Premier Doug Ford during this election seemed to be "mandate" - noting that he intends to get some clear-cut legislation in place in an effort to defend Ontarians from the impending tariff threats from Donald Trump.

"Donald Trump thinks he can break us," Ford announced upon winning a Conservative majority during the late evening of Feb. 27. "Canada is not for sale."

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Water levels creep up towards the park at the Minden Whitewater Preserve during a past flood season. /FILE

Carter hopeful for a 'gradual melt'

from page 1

we have to be ready for," said president of the centre, Gary Stoner. In the past, the food centre supplied warm soup and fresh sandwiches to volunteers assisting in flood relief. They also partnered with the Red Cross during past floods to offer food to those who were displaced from their homes or businesses due to flood damages.

"Hopefully, we will get a nice, gradual melt," said Carter, noting that a silver lining to the quick and heavy winter was that the ground did not entirely freeze, offering some wiggle room for water storage in the land. "Right now, other than having a lot of snow, there is no indication whatsoever that it could turn into a flood."

While Carter noted that many people in Minden have been through a flooding experience before, he suggests looking up some information online about how to be effectively ready for a potential disaster. "We need to be prepared for any type of emergency," he said. The township has an emergency management plan in place, and is ready to launch the plan should the need arise. "We know what to do, and how to do it," Carter said. "All we can do is project and prepare as much as we can."

Algonquin Highlands nears final 2025 spending plan

by **JAMES MATTHEWS**
Times Staff

Algonquin Highlands residents may face an almost five per cent municipal tax increase for this year.

The 2025 draft municipal capital and operating budget was debated over a pair of special meetings Feb. 27 and 28. The budget will be revisited for approval or further debate during council's next meeting March 6.

The draft spending plan initially included a levy increase of just over seven per cent which equated to an additional $470,908 and a municipal tax rate increase of 5.7 per cent.

That represented an increase of just over $21.

By the end of the second day, council had whittled down the tax levy increase to 5.37 per cent more than last year. That means an extra $15 for every $100,000 in assessed property value for the municipal portion of taxation. That would barely lift the needle on your vehicle's gas gauge.

Including taxes to Haliburton County and for education, taxpayers will see an extra $31 for every $100,000 of assessed property value. Again, you'd barely nudge the car's petrol gauge.

"I think what we are doing is reducing our own offerings in order to offset the inflationary increases that are entirely out of our control, I would really hate to reduce it anymore," Deputy Mayor Jennifer Dailloux said about budget items.

"We're doing our level best here. And almost everything has to do with all of these increases (that), bar a tiny bit, have to do with things that are outside of our control. So I am happy with where we are. I don't think I would want to eke out any pennies. It's not our fault."

"Good job everyone," Mayor Liz Danielsen said. "Thanks for all the hard work on getting us where we are. I think that this is a reasonable position for us to be in."

Algonquin Highlands Mayor Liz Danielsen shared that she is content with the final numbers around the 2025 municipal budget. /FILE

Property tax continues to be the biggest single source of revenue for the township. Taxes are set for properties based on the property's value as deemed by the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC).

MPAC hasn't assessed properties since 2016. That means municipalities have dated values on which to base tax rates, despite any increased expenditures that have come about since the last assessments.

But the township realized 1.24 per cent in assessment growth for 2025, which helps to offset any budget levy increase.

That 1.24 per cent and the two per cent annual cost of living increase form part of the jump which means the remaining four per cent can be attributed to additional projects and higher costs of goods, services, and programs offered by the township.

Jean Hughes, the township's treasurer, said in a report to council that a 35 per cent decrease had been anticipated in 2024 to the reserves.

But, with final transfers in place and based on actual costs and after department surpluses were calculated, the township realized a reduction of only 15 per cent.

Based on initial estimates for 2025, Hughes said the municipality estimated a reduction of 11 per cent to the reserves. But that was before council agreed to a further reduction to seven per cent to reserves.

"We left five per cent back in the reserves," Hughes said. "We didn't take it from that."

Some of the draft costs are expenses demanded of the municipality and out of council's control. The cost for OPP service is a prime example of a bill that's dictated to the municipality.

Provincially, police services for 2025 increased 4.55 per cent in comparison to 2024. That was a revised costing as the proposed tab originally represented an extra 21 per cent or $44,000.

Budget additions include money allocated to the monitoring of short-term rental properties, annual benefit coverage increases of 7.5 per cent, annual municipal insurance coverage increases of 10 per cent and an overall two per cent wage increase on par with the cost of living adjustment and new hires.

That represents an increase of about $228,000.

A council-directed increase includes cost considerations for the mobile truck service at Hawk Lake Landfill. That's an estimated increase of $118,000.

The 2025 spending plan incorporates expenditures and funding solutions for several new and ongoing projects.

Renovations at the existing public works garage are underway, as are fire stations repairs at stations 60 and 70 along with regular annual equipment replacements.

The budget's draft included costing for additional training for building and bylaw staff, the purchase of a Hybrid SUV for the Bylaw Department and costings related to the monitoring and enforcement of short-term property rentals and increased bylaw coverage on weekends.

Much of the increase in money for the township's parks, recreation, and trails programming is related to an increase in reserves contributions to cover future equipment needs. There was also an increase under training and education as the municipality has a relatively new team in that department.

"As always the budget incorporates costs throughout to continually improve efficiencies and effectiveness, including building and facility improvements, technology upgrades, and security upgrades," Hughes said in her report to council.

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COUNCIL MEETINGS VIRTUAL & IN-PERSON

Council and Closed Session meetings are currently being conducted in-person (Council Chambers, 7 Milne St., Minden) and with electronic participation. The scheduled upcoming meetings are:
March 13 – Regular Council Meeting
March 27 – Regular Council Meeting

Members of the Public are invited to observe Council proceedings by attending in-person or via the live-stream link.

MINDEN HILLS CULTURAL CENTRE

• The 2nd Annual Archie Stouffer Student Art Exhibit – The Land Between, will be on display in the Agnes Jamieson Gallery until March 15. Artists from Grades 1 to 8 created over 100 pieces that are included in the exhibition.

• Nature's Place will be open daily for March Break Drop-in Programs, March 10 - 14 from 10:00am – 12:00pm. Explore different themes each day through hands-on activities and exhibits! Suitable for ages 5+.

• In celebration of International Women's Day, the thought-provoking documentary "Arab Women Say What?!" (2021) will be presented at the Cultural Centre on Thursday, March 6, at 1:00 pm. Admission is free, all ages are welcome. The documentary is provided courtesy of the National Film Board (NFB).

For information on all the programs and exhibits offered at the Minden Hills Cultural Centre: culturalcentre@mindenhills.ca or call 705-286-3763.

MARCH BREAK AT THE ARENA

Come and join the SG Nesbitt Memorial Arena in a variety of drop-in ice programs during March Break. For full list of events and pricing please visit mindenhills.ca/recreation.

TOWNSHIP SEEKING MEMBERS FOR THE PROPERTY STANDARDS COMMITTEE

The Township of Minden Hills is currently seeking resident members to serve on the Property Standards Committee for the 2024-2026 term. Interested individuals are encouraged to apply by submitting a copy of their resume and cover letter to admin@mindenhills.ca deadline extended to March 14, 2025. For more information regarding the Property Standards Committee visit www.mindenhills.ca/newsroom.

EXPRESSION OF INTEREST: REDEVELOPMENT OF LOCHLIN COMMUNITY CENTRE

The Township of Minden Hills is seeking partners for the re-development of the Community Centre (4713 Gelert Road, Lochlin) and property and is requesting Expressions of Interest (EOI). The redevelopment plan(s) must meet a broad community need and include gathering space to serve the neighbouring and broader communities. To be considered, all replies to or questions about this notice should be submitted by emailing Wendelin Lonergan, Director of Finance, at wlonergan@mindenhills.ca
Deadline for submission: March 24, 2025, by 12:00 noon.
For complete details and proposal requirements, please visit www.mindenhills.ca/newsroom.

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Haliburton County sees long-term population growth

by JAMES MATTHEWS
Times Staff

For Haliburton County to best meet the future needs of its residents, it'd be a good idea to have some idea as to how that population could grow.

The county is responsible for identifying, coordinating, and allocating population, dwelling, and employment projections. This includes determining areas for growth and setting targets for intensification and redevelopment.

It's a practice that's done by the upper tier every decade or so to provide a look at where and how growth will take place.

Elizabeth Purcell, the county's planning director, said the growth strategy will help accurately and efficiently guide growth across the county over the coming years.

Watson and Associates Economists, an economic consulting firm, presented the county's 2025 Growth Strategy when council met Feb. 26. The plan projections include Algonquin Highlands, Dysart, Minden Hills, and Highlands East.

Those being the municipalities that make up the county, of course.

It is anticipated that there will be an annual permanent population growth of one per cent and a projected permanent population of 28,200 by 2051. Water and wastewater servicing capacity constraints of the four lower tier municipalities will limit the scope of growth throughout the county.

Permanent population in Minden Hills is expected to grow 32 per cent by 2051. Dysart is expected to grow by 36 per cent by that year and Algonquin Highlands and Highlands East could see 14 per cent and 18 per cent growth respectively.

The aging population will have bearing on future housing and service needs. The number of residents 65 years old and older is set to increase 45 per cent in 2051. Provincially, growth of that population segment is pegged to be 20 per cent by 2046.

In Haliburton County, population growth primarily comes from inter-provincial migration.

And the county is projected to see an increase of about 3,800 permanent housing units between 2021-2051.

That includes 68 newly constructed units a year and 58 seasonal dwellings converted to permanent households annually. The conversion of cottages is expected to represent about 40 per cent of the overall growth in permanent households.

The report forecasts 91 per cent of housing growth will occur in rural areas with nine per cent in the urban settlement areas.

And there's expected to be 1,500 more jobs in the county by 2051, according to the consultants' final report.

Jamie Cook of Watson and Associates, said the strategy shows a long-term forecast for population growth and will form a foundation for the county's Development Charges Background Study that's happening now.

He said the outlining theme of the strategy was a more outcome-based and less prescriptive approach to land use planning. It's part of the province's hope to have 1.5 million homes built over the next 10 years.

"A key thrust of this document is to remove unnecessary prescriptive process and restrictions to development to accommodate more housing growth," Cook said.

Statistics Canada data into housing growth from 2016 to 2021 doesn't necessarily reflect new home builds. Rather, it includes the conversion of seasonal residences to permanent residences as new housing.

"That's one of the key drivers of the growth increase you're seeing in the housing numbers from 2016 to 2021 relative to the 2011 to 2016 period, the previous period," Cook said.

He added that there hasn't been a spike in new housing construction activity, but there has been a peak in the number of dwelling conversions, particularly during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic between 2020 to 2022. That's when people were skidding out of the more populated areas and spending more time in cottage country.

"And that's what's been showing up in this data," he said. "Over the long term, we do expect to see the number of conversions to moderate and we would also expect the amount of actual housing constriction moderating slightly as well."

Cook said they've predicted an average of about 125 new houses, which includes conversions, every year of the long-term growth forecast.

"We would recommend that the county undertake a review of its servicing capacity and solutions to ultimately provide water and wastewater services over the long term," he said. "If solutions are identified, we would recommend the county relook at these long-term population forecasts in the future."

Councillor Murray Fearrey, Dysart's mayor, said he believes the information in the growth strategy shows a level of optimism.

"It's nice to see people are still optimistic," Fearrey said.

Coun. Cecil Ryall, the deputy mayor of Highlands East, said he has a hard time digesting the report's reference to seasonal.

"Seasonal used to be more or less related to a specific set of time," he said. "Be it May to September. I think the more correct term now is part-time (residents) in the sense that people are no longer coming in any specific season. They're coming on a part-time basis."

Regardless of part-time versus permanent demographics, Ryall said the municipalities continue to have the same infrastructure against the new demands being placed on that infrastructure.

"And we still don't have any more taxes to pay that with," Ryall said. "It is what it is. We've still got the problem of how do we pay for what we need to have?"

"We could call them second homeowners," Cook said. "We could call them part-time, full-time. We are addressing the service impacts in terms of the development charge needs and servicing needs in the (development charges) study."

Coun. Jennifer Dailloux, Algonquin Highlands' deputy mayor, said the data about the conversion rates from seasonal to permanent housing was very interesting.

"And how why I think that's particularly helpful for us here at this table is because it gives us a prelude to the sort of service need changes that are going to occur that had nothing to do with population growth so much as demands on services that exist at a higher rate," she said.

Coun. Bob Carter, the mayor of Minden Hills, said confusion abounds when dealing with government. The population statistics spoken about could be from Ministry of Health data as opposed to a whole other pile of information that's influenced by the Ministry of Finance.

"As we can see, they're different," he said, and added that he understands the growth strategy will be the county's official document.

"My concern is that we have to understand that this isn't the Bible," Carter said. "This is something that is indicative of what our situation is."

Minden's Rockcliffe update

by THOMAS SMITH
Times Staff

As a teen in the 1960s, Jim Ecclestone was a frequent visitor to the Rockliffe Tavern, visiting by snowmobile during the winter for drinks. In the summers, Ecclestone's family would stay at their family cottage on Gull Lake, a family tradition that began when his grandparents purchased the cottage in 1936.

In 1985, Ecclestone started Calstone in Toronto, an OEM manufacturing business. The family's business has seen great success and now has over 170 employees.

"It is my favourite place on Earth," said Ecclestone. "On Gull Lake."

In the past, the Rockcliffe Tavern was the go-to place to eat, drink, and play pool. It was the perfect hub for young people looking for something to do, says Ecclestone.

Now, Ecclestone's three children, twins Laura and Jamie, and son Matthew are the owners of the Rockcliffe in Minden. The family purchased the property from Mark and Lise Dracup, Dan Gosselin and Kirsty Goodearle last year.

"It was a no-brainer for them," said Ecclestone. "They said, we've got to own the Rockcliffe."

Enlisting the help of contractor Shane Gallagher, Ecclestone quickly learned the state of the Rockcliffe. The first day he entered, he found a half-full glass of beer left on the counter, as if someone had left in a hurry.

"It was disgusting," said Ecclestone. "It was terrible."

After gutting the walls and accessing the condition, Ecclestone learned that one section of the building needs to come down, describing it as "rotten". After investigating the roof and foundation, Gallagher told Ecclestone that it is possible to save the main section of the Rockcliffe.

"It's a historical building," said Ecclestone. "It's a Minden landmark, it's what made the little town of Minden, Minden."

Ecclestone remains hopeful that the Rockcliffe will be open to the public in the future, though he wants to be clear that they are in the early stages of rehabilitation.

The well-known Rockcliffe in Minden has been undergoing renovations in an effort to open it's doors once again, according to new owner, Jim Ecclestone. /FILE

By July of this year, Ecclestone hopes that they will have installed a new subfloor, fixed up the foundation, and stripped things to the bare bones. Ecclestone is eyeing the Aug.1 weekend to have a garage sale/flea market event in the Rockcliffe to raise money for the Minden Community Food Centre. After 15 years of involvement with a food bank in Don Mills, Ecclestone has become closely involved with the Minden Community Food Centre.

"At our age, if you can, you give back," said Ecclestone. "You have a great group of volunteers that want to do more for the town."

"His commitment to the food bank has been nothing short of inspiring," said Jean Munroe, manager of the Minden Community Food Centre. "As a new and welcomed board member, Jim brings valuable insights and dedication to addressing the needs of the food bank and increasing awareness of its mission within the community. His efforts demonstrate a deep understanding of the challenges faced by those in need, and his proactive involvement is paving the way for meaningful change. We are truly fortunate to have someone of his caliber championing this cause and look forward to the innovative ideas and energy he will bring to our shared mission."

Ecclestone shared that he hopes that the Rockcliffe will be able to be rented out by local volunteering clubs.

For now, Rockcliffe's future looks promising.

Ecclestone says that he hopes that the owners of the Beaver Theatre will see the work he is doing on the Rockcliffe and tear the building down.

"I am trying to make an impression with the Rockcliffe," said Ecclestone. "Some buildings could use some touch-ups."

Business groups brace for possible trade war with U.S.

by **JAMES MATTHEWS**
Times Staff

Many business communities are circling their wagons in anticipation of an economic war with Canada's largest trading partner.

Industries and business groups, municipalities and communities are bracing for possible financial impacts. The wariness extends even to Haliburton County.

The expected salvos: A barrage of tariffs, one country answering the other.

United States President Donald Trump dangled the threat of 25 per cent tariffs on imported goods from Canada. Except for Canadian energy resources. He hit the electricity that New York State depends on with a 10 per cent tariff.

So Canada unveiled the treat of retaliatory tariffs on products worth $155 billion from the United States. Tariffs threatened by both countries were delayed for 30 days at the beginning of February, and the uncertainty continues into March.

Tariffs are taxes on goods paid by importers. So Canadian companies who sell their wares to industry and consumers south of the border would pay. American companies selling to Canadian markets would pay the tariffs imposed by Canada.

Money generated by the import fee would go to the respective government that imposed it.

That is, if the stalemate is broken and the tariffs are imposed.

American producers of poultry, meat products in various forms, pork, dairy products, natural honey, and some fruits and vegetables could face higher import fees to the Canadian marketplace.

Spices and various grains and rice are on the tariff list. Wine, fermented beverages, and tobacco products from the U.S. may have increased tariffs. Fabrics, plastics, and metals are on the list. Makeup and some other beauty products are there, too, as are materials and tools necessary for manufacturing and construction.

> **"TARIFFS MAKE NO SENSE BETWEEN THE TWO CLOSEST ALLIES THE WORLD HAS EVER KNOWN"**
> **— AMANDA CONN, HALIBURTON HIGHLANDS CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**

Patti Tallman, the executive director at the Haliburton County Development Corporation, said the possible monetary ruckus at the border is a concern for the local economy and how it could impact the community as a whole.

"The local businesses that currently bring goods from the U.S. markets are having to look at things differently," she said.

The Haliburton Highlands Chamber of Commerce, along with the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, is conducting a survey to understand the potential impact of U.S. and Canadian tariffs on the county's business community.

Amanda Conn, Haliburton Highlands Chamber of Commerce's executive director, said survey responses will help advocate for policies and resources that support Ontario's business community.

"A 30-day delay means more time for Canadian businesses and governments to drive home the point that tariffs make no sense between the two closest allies the world has ever known," Conn said in an email.

Candace Laing, the national chamber's president and CEO, said the standoff makes it clear that perpetual uncertainty will continue.

"Businesses and investors already feel on shaky ground with the 30-day tariff pause, and now our steel and aluminum industries are first into the fire," she said.

Stakeholders in the construction industry, interior design and decor, retailers, grocery stores all import something from south of the border.

"You may see some stockpile products and critical materials in advance of the tariffs or work with existing U.S. suppliers to absorb some of the tariff costs or explore alternative pricing strategies," Tallman said.

Ultimately, she said tariffs could increase costs. As such, businesses will have to consider whether to absorb the extra costs, pass them on to the customer, or adjust their business model.

Tallman said this is a time to consider new markets and to source materials from Canadian suppliers.

"But, more importantly, how can we look to support our local business community to support our own businesses as much as possible?" she said. "It not only will impact our businesses but will have a trickle effect on everyone buying our day-to-day goods and services."

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Loose change

IT IS ESTIMATED that the final price tag on this snap provincial election is $189 million. That amount is coming exclusively from taxpayers' pockets. We paid for this.

We paid $189 million for absolutely nothing to change.

$189 million is not loose change. In fact, if you had access to those funds and spent $10,000 every single day for 50 years, you still would not reach $189 million.

And that's how much the PC government blew in less than a month. Your money.

Now I'd be the first to call out municipal governments and some of their decisions, but where I will give them credit is that they have spent countless hours whittling away at a budget that would impact taxpayers in the least detrimental way.

EMILY STONEHOUSE
Editor

Because to a certain extent, they get it.

They see that our community is struggling. That food bank usage is at an all-time high. That service clubs are asking for funds at road tolls to keep community events alive. That firewood and groceries and every single aspect of our cost of living is borderline unattainable.

We're struggling. Some more than others. But every single Ontarian is impacted.

And we just blew $189 million on the most pointless election of all time.

Ford is able to sit comfy on his Throne of Greed while he spent our money to be re-elected. $189 million may be loose change to him, but it's a livelihood for us; the people he's supposed to be representing.

And what's stopping him from calling another election a few years from now? Yes, terms are designed to be in four year chunks, but that didn't slow him down. He waited a mere two years from the last election, and managed to time this one with a weather warning and unsafe driving conditions. A perfect storm. There hasn't been a winter provincial election since 1981. It's not heard of, not needed, not safe, not fair, not democratic.

I won't get into the shortcomings of Ford; his complete disregard for environmental initiatives, his ambivalence towards rural healthcare, his unwillingness to endorse or consider BIPOC and 2SLGBTQIA+ communities, his continued support of Elon Musk, even after putting on a song and dance about cutting ties with the U.S.

He's all talk, no action; sitting high and mighty on his Throne of Greed, his loose change burning a hole in his pocket, itching for more power.

I can't imagine what $189 million would do for our community. For our healthcare. For our schools. For our people.

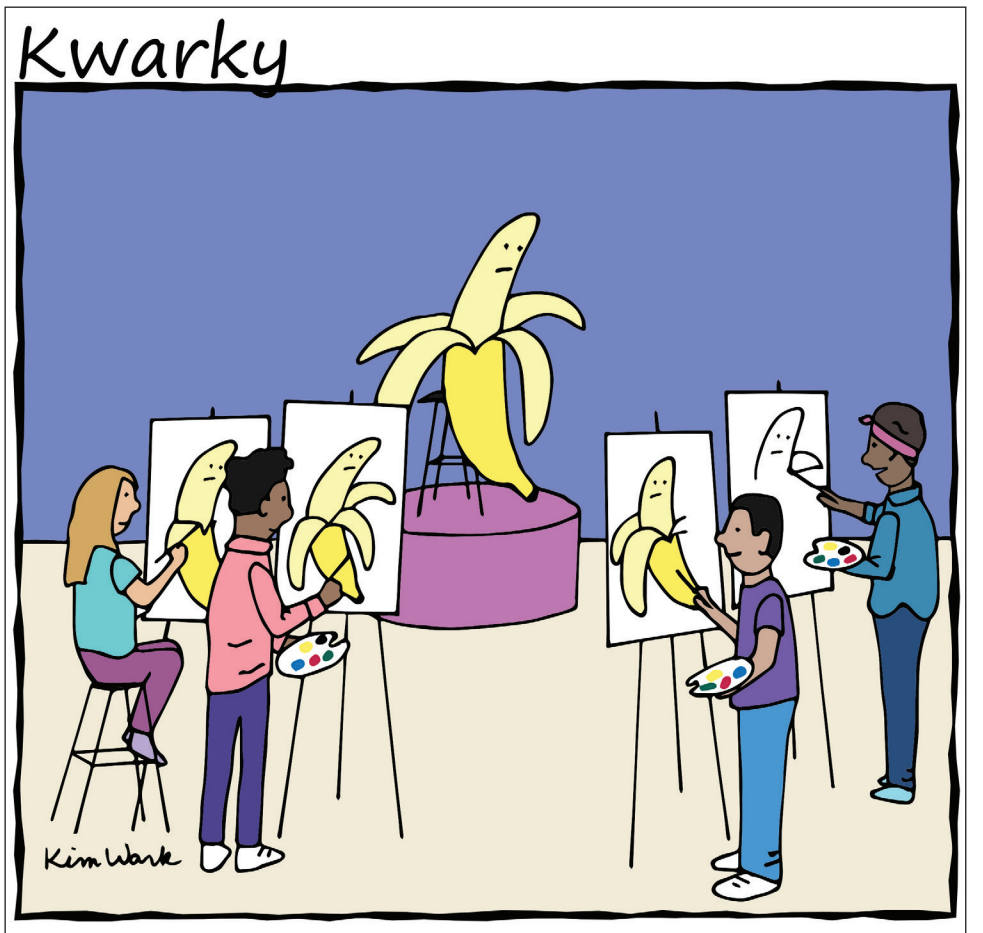
Three years ago, the final numbers came out for the new and improved SG Nesbitt Memorial Arena. It had a shiny price tag of $13.3 million. The town was outraged, and rightfully so. It was a significant chunk above the original proposal of nine million.

But as time went on, we saw that the arena was used. Every day, it offered programming to seniors, events for kids. It became the home of a well-known hockey team, and a hub for the community. We turned rocks into diamonds, an oyster into a pearl.

Right now, we should all be outraged at $189 million for a pointless election. We should all be angry.

But I hope with these next two, four, six, years (whatever Ford feels like doing, he's the boss), we can find our footing and hope that real, concrete change is made.

Because we're all tapped out of loose change.



"I'm loving this still life and nude combo class."

Struggling just makes it worse

LIKE MANY FELLOWS of my vintage, I consumed a steady diet of adventure movies about people trekking through jungles when I was younger. In almost every one, someone got swallowed by quicksand. Apparently, this is a routine occurrence in tropical climes, right up there with the tiger encounters, blowgun-wielding natives, blood-thirsty leeches, and piranhas.

Quicksand is one of those things that every tropical area possesses, so putting a quicksand scene in movies like these was educational tool for budding outdoorsman like me.

STEVE GALEA
Beyond 35

Any young outdoorsman or woman observing these quicksand scenes would quickly surmise that if you stepped in quicksand, it was best to be in the company of a friend or an intelligent, empathetic chimpanzee. Moreover, someone in the party needs to carry a rope, belt, sash on her impracticable safari dress, or have access to a long sturdy stick. And it helps to wear a hat that would float on top and avoid villains who go "Muah,…ha…haa!" as they watch you sink.

Morevoer, it's best to have a person in the party pass along the advice, "Don't struggle, it only makes it worse!"

All this prepared me for tropical quicksand encounters. But what it didn't do was prepare me for my own experience, when walking my dog this morning.

Rosie was walking off-lead and decided to climb a high snowbank to answer nature's call. I'm not sure if she did this for the view or to assert dominance on those of us below.

It didn't really matter. What did matter is that I had to climb that mountain of snow with poop bag in hand to clean up after her. (OK, it wasn't for the view.)

I made my way up there and was about to bend down to package the waste when I found myself sinking in our equivalent of quicksand – what I call quicksnow.

My immediate reaction was to look in the trees on the off chance that an intelligent, empathetic, chimp had escaped from a local zoo. But, it was not to be.

By the time this sunk in, I was knee deep.

That's when a voice in my head said, "Don't struggle, it only makes it worse."

I wiggled a bit and sunk some more. This time I settled midway between my knees and belt buckle.

I looked at my dog and realized two things. One, that this might be the way that it ends. And two, ironically enough, this was one of the first time in recent memory that she wasn't running around with a stick in her mouth.

I took comfort in the fact that I was wearing a hat, however.

I stood helplessly waiting for help before sinking over my head for good – but we live on a quiet street and it was 6 a.m.

So, I figured I might as well bag the dog droppings and leave the bag on the snow beside me as a marker for the rescue teams. Perhaps Jenn might see it and say, "My goodness. That's our brand of dog poop bags! He can't be far."

But then, as luck would have it. I was able to lift a foot our the quicksnow and onto a hard block of snow atop of the mound. Then I begin the process of clumsily sliding down the hill, with dignity and dog poop bag in tact.

Today, I am pricing pet chimpanzees.

InOtherWords

Columns and Letters to the Editor

Look back… look way back

AS LONG AS humans have exchanged knowledge, there have been efforts to preserve information and destroy information. Whether the format has been clay, parchment, paper, or digital, archives have played key roles in preserving information. In many societies, oral histories, handicrafts, and other art have also served as ways to preserve information such as historical events, instructions for important skills, and treaties between nations. This preservation is so important that in times of war and political upheaval, it becomes the target for interference whether physically or financially.

There are limitations to how well we can preserve information. Each human perspective is different, and no one effort can capture each individual experience. Archives have a finite physical capacity with limited space for items. For digital information, changes in formats and degradation are both challenges. Oral histories can be lost through genocide.

ERIN KERNOHAN-BERNING

Humans and Technology

The decision on what to keep affects who is represented in our information ecosystem. The information in archives often neglects marginalized or oppressed groups. Modern archives have made strides to try and correct this, with special attention being given to reflecting the experiences and histories of Indigenous peoples, LGBTQ+ people, Black Americans, and others who have been harmed by colonialism and imperialism.

While the internet and world wide web both promised access to the entirety of human knowledge, early on the problem of losing that information needed to be grappled with. With websites being able to be edited and deleted with ease, where was the ability to be able to go back and look at previous versions – information that could be completely lost? In 2001, the Wayback Machine was launched by the Internet Archive to help solve this problem.

The Wayback Machine (which is a nod to the Rocky and Bullwinkle segment, *Peabody's Improbable History*) uses a program called a web crawler that essentially takes a snapshot of as many websites as it can. Since it started, over 900 billion websites have been archived by the Wayback Machine and can be searched from Archive.org. If you are searching for a website that no longer exists or want to see how information has been changed on a website, you are very likely to find it using the Wayback Machine.

Since Donald Trump was elected to his second term as President of the United States, he has issued a flurry of executive orders that have involved key government agencies, including the USDA, FDA, and CDC, being directed to remove certain information from their websites. This has included information on transgender health, gender affirming care, climate change, and communicable diseases such as bird flu and HIV. While many of these websites were restored through a federal court order, some websites with information geared toward LGBTQ+ people have been published with a notice regarding the Trump administration's decidedly non-scientific stance on those subjects.

While such information can be found elsewhere – government and non-government organizations around the world also publish information on these topics – none of this information is researched and created in a national bubble. Subject experts at U.S. government agencies have historically cooperated with other agencies worldwide to research topics for the public good and contribute to guidelines and best practices around them. As well, U.S. government agencies provide information particularly relevant to the citizens of the United States. Someone in California trying to find information on bird flu in their area aren't going to be well-served visiting the Public Health Agency of Canada's webpage on the topic. The vandalism of this information by the Trump administration has consequences both in the U.S. and worldwide.

Another project the Internet Archive is involved in is the End of Term (EOT) Web Archive Project. Since 2004, the EOT has archived US Government websites as new administrations take office. It's not unusual for governments to change web content from administration to administration. In the best-case scenario, the EOT helps maintain a historical record of those changes. With the current situation in the U.S., it has become crucial to be able to view previous versions of important websites that have been targeted because of a political or ideological vendetta. The EOT's efforts mean that as many snapshots of these websites as possible are available on the Wayback Machine.

Thankfully, similar efforts have been made in Canada using the Wayback Machine, and our own Library and Archives Canada also hosts a Government of Canada Web Archive. What is happening right now in the U.S. should remind us all of the importance of preserving digital information. Suzanne Nossel wrote in *Foreign Policy Magazine*, "The eraser is a key tool of autocrats," and, "In the ongoing struggle against authoritarianism, memory is an essential asset." Preserving digital archives will continue to be an important cornerstone today's fight for democracy, including here in Canada.

Minden Memories

A large black-and-white cabinet card photo features the well-dressed Hagan family and Alfred Palmer, with the men wearing watches and one in a cravat, while the young girls are in white dresses with black leggings. Two women in the back stand out with their large hats known as flower pot. /Photo courtesy of the Minden Hills Cultural Centre

letters to the editor

A change in politics?

To the Editor,

A big congratulations to our MPP, Laurie Scott. Laurie has represented Haliburton Kawartha Lakes Brock for, I believe, the seventh time, a remarkable accomplishment. Ms. Scott won with over 52% of the votes cast.

A recent article in the *Minden Times* titled *Scott skips candidates debate; left reps show up* highlights an interesting change in politics. In times past, debates were a key strategy for success in elections. Most ridings held neutral debates, often run by the Chamber of Commerce. If the debates were neutral, the candidates would be enticed to show up and demonstrate their debating skills.

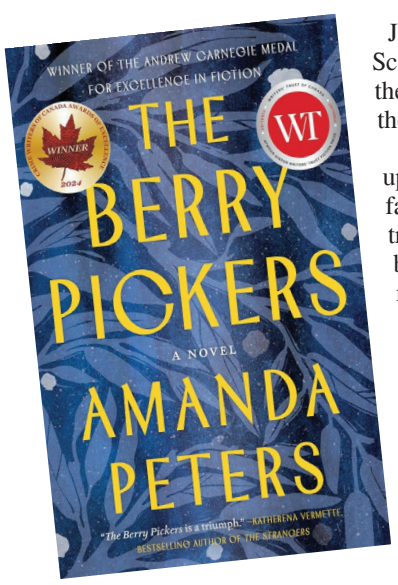
More recently, local candidates often skip debates to focus on grassroots door-to-door campaigning. The respective leaders will do one or two televised debates so voters can hear the leaders and understand their policy choices. Why the change? A debate takes time for candidates, especially incumbents, to prepare. The debate takes hours from when the candidate shows up to when they leave. Most people attending local debates have already decided who to support and are unlikely to be swayed by anything they hear.

A single-issue debate is much worse and historically not attended by incumbents of any political party. The one highlighted in the story was an example. Further, according to the *Times*, it was viewed by only 50 people. Elections Ontario's unofficial results show that over 51,000 people voted. So, those who tuned in online represented a very small number of people who were engaged enough to vote.

Will local candidate debates happen in the federal election? I don't know, but if people want to see the local candidate from any party, a quick phone call to the campaign office will likely get a response and a return call. Having meaningful one-on-one discussions with the people asking for your vote is often a better solution to get questions answered. People must be engaged with their candidates to ensure their voices are heard.

Kelly Mitchell,
Haliburton

HCPL's Book of the Week



July 1962. A Mi'kmaq family from Nova Scotia arrives in Maine to pick blueberries for the summer. Weeks later, four-year-old Ruthie, the family's youngest child, vanishes.

In Maine, a young girl named Norma grows up as the only child of an affluent family. Her father is emotionally distant, her mother frustratingly overprotective. Norma is often troubled by recurring dreams and visions that seem more like memories than imagination. As she grows older, Norma slowly comes to realize there is something her parents aren't telling her. Unwilling to abandon her intuition, she will spend decades trying to uncover this family secret.

The Berry Pickers by Amanda Peters is available to borrow as a book or book club set from the Haliburton County Public Library.

Huskies Hockey

Hometown proud

For their last home game of the regular season, the Haliburton County Huskies faced off against the North York Rangers, clutching an impressive 10-2 lead over the visiting team. The boys are now headed into their playoff run, with the first round slated for this coming week against the St. Michaels Buzzers, based out of Toronto. The Huskies are currently third in the Eastern Conference standings of the Ontario Junior Hockey League. The Times will keep readers up to date on the ongoing playoff run. /TIM TANO staff photographer

Unions say schools are shortchanged by province

by JAMES MATTHEWS
Times Staff

Unions representing Ontario school workers say underfunding has jeopardized education and left student needs unmet.

A recent survey of Ontario education workers represented by the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) and the Ontario School Board Council of Unions (OSBCU) shows that a severe crisis in underfunding has led to extreme understaffing.

According to the labour groups, provincewide real per-pupil funding cuts have tallied $1,114 per student. The total provincial cut in 2024-25 school year totalled $2.3 billion.

In 2024-25, spending on education has been reduced to 14 per cent of total government revenue. That is to say, there is room in the Ontario budget to substantially increase spending on education.

In 2011-12, government spending on school boards was 19 per cent of total government revenue.

Students' needs have gone unmet and violence has increased in the Trillium Lakelands District, Kawartha Pine Ridge, and Peterborough Victoria Northumberland Clarington Catholic school boards.

Those workers surveyed included educational assistants, early childhood educators, child and youth workers, custodians, maintenance and trades workers, and school secretaries.

The CUPE-OSBCU survey pointed to a crisis of understaffing in all classifications, causing insufficient supports for students and school staff, according to a press release issued by the labour groups.

"School offices are overburdened by increasing demands, school cleaning suffers, and repairs are delayed or go undone," the unions said. "Many education workers at the three school boards say they face violent incidents on a daily basis."

Trillium Lakelands District board, which governs schools that serve 17,431 students in the Haliburton County area, lost more than $19.4 million in per-pupil funding this school year.

The survey indicated losses were steeper in dollar amounts in neighbouring school districts.

The Kawartha Pine Ridge board has had a minimum of a $41 million cut by the Conservative government to real per-pupil funding. The Peterborough Victoria Northumberland Clarington Catholic board has faced a real per-pupil cut of $17 million.

Had education spending remained at 2011-12 levels (as a proportion of government revenue) there would be $10.7 billion more in funding to school boards this year.

According to union leadership: "By any measure, Ontario has the resources to fund schools sufficiently to meet student needs, provide all services and supports to help all students succeed, substantially reduce the number of violent and disruptive incidents in schools, ensure schools meet the highest standards of cleanliness and repair, and provide good, secure, and safe jobs for members of our communities."

AH updates staff overtime policy

by JAMES MATTHEWS
Times Staff

Algonquin Highlands' outside municipal workers got an increase on the number of overtime hours they're permitted to bank.

Angie Bird, the township's CAO, said the municipal overtime policy has been in place since 2012 when such policies were collected from municipalities across Ontario for comparison.

That was the year the policy changed for salaried staff such as the CAO, department heads, and managers. They were allowed to bank overtime up to 40 hours per year.

"Banked overtime for salaried employees does not have a cash value and any overtime accumulated over and above 40 hours is forfeited," Bird said. "Nothing was changed with outside workers as they were able to bank 40 hours per year, with any hours accumulated above 40 hours being paid out with each subsequent payroll cycle."

The industry standard continues to recognize that CAOs, department heads and managers are paid a premium salary and that some overtime may be necessary as part of the employee's normal responsibility in the performance of duties.

The industry standard now indicates that municipal outside workers are generally permitted to accumulate 80 hours per year of overtime before it is required to be paid out, Bird said.

The proposed revised policy also includes new coordinator positions created since 2012.

Birds said in a report to council that amending the policy will reflect Algonquin Highlands' desire to stay current and competitive within Haliburton County and the municipal sector overall.

"It will also illustrate council's continued effort to support a work environment that values a work-life balance for its dedicated employees," she wrote.

Community events sponsored by

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Youth Unlimited Gym Nights
When: Mar 7 - Sports and Dodgeball 6:30 to 9
p.m., Apr 4 - Sports and 9 Square 6:30 to 9 p.m.
Where: Haliburton Highlands Secondary School
For Grades 6 to 12. For more info contact haliburton@youthunlimitedkaw.com.

Lenten Lunches
When: Wednesdays at noon
Where: March 12 – St. Paul's Anglican Church
March 19 – Highland Hills United Church
March 26 – St. Paul's Anglican Church
April 2 – Our Lady of Fatima Catholic Church
April 9 – Minden Bible Church
Service at noon followed by Soup Lunch. By Donation.

Metabolic Flexibility: The Key to Healthy Aging
When: Tuesday, March 18 at 7 p.m.
Where: Schofield Room, Haliburton Legion, 719 Mountain St., Haliburton
A discussion with Dr. Norm Bottum of the Haliburton Family Medical Centre, who will discuss what good metabolic health is and how to make some simple lifestyle changes that can improve our metabolic health, leading to a better quality of life. This is part of a continuing series on "Making our Communities Better Places", and will be opened with music by Brian Sachs and Peter Smith. Open to all, free, light refreshments provided. Hosted by the Baha'i community of Haliburton.

HHOA Wild Game Dinner
When: Saturday, March 29
Bar opens at 5 p.m., Dinner at 6:30 p.m.
Where: Haliburton Legion, Main Hall
Tickets: $50 person
Silent Auction. 50/50 draw. Tickets are on sale.
For credit card purchases call Laurie at HHOA on
Tuesday and Thursdays 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at 705-
457-9664 or Linda at 705 457-2064. For in person
sales drop in to see Laurie at HHOA on Tuesdays
and Thursdays 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. The wild game
served at this event has not been inspected under the R.S.O. meat inspection act. Domestic
meat available. Website: hhoa.on.ca

Recurring events

Weekly Meat Rolls
When: Every Saturday, 3 p.m.
Where: Coboconk Legion, Hwy 48 and 35
Join us for our weekly meat draw at the Coboconk Legion. Five spins for $10. The first four rounds are for highest and lowest score with
two winners per round. The last round is for a prepare-it-yourself dinner for two. Additional spins
for this round are available for $2 each. Call 705-
454-8127 or email info@coboconklegion.ca for
more information.

TOPS: Take Off Pounds Sensibly
When: Monday mornings 9:30 to 11 a.m.
Where: Haliburton Legion Branch 129, upper level
Admission: Yearly membership of $59
A non-profit/commercial network of weight-loss
support groups, offers programs for healthy living
and weight management.

Ctrl-Art-Del's *Dracula* show brings camp to the county

by **THOMAS SMITH**
Times Staff

After seeing clips of *Dracula: A Comedy of Terrors* on TikTok, Ctrl-Art-Del co-founder and current stage manager Ella Leis knew that the campy rendition of Dracula was perfect for the stage in Haliburton.

The play is a contemporary and queer-coded retelling of the story of *Dracula.* Premiering Off-Broadway in 2023, the play became viral through clips on the app TikTok.

In the story, Mina, Lucy Westfeldt's sister, falls ill. So Westfeldt and her fiancée, Jonathan Harker enlist the help of Dr. Jean, Van Helsing, the famous vampire hunter to search for the "dangerous and sexy" Count Dracula.

Dracula: A Comedy of Terrors combines the elements of gothic horror with the campness of *Rocky Horror Picture Show*. With 20 roles in the play, characters are heavily encouraged to be gender swapped. In Ctrl-Art-Del's version of *Dracula: A Comedy of Terrors*, the titular Dracula will be played by Christine Carr. The show prides itself with having a completely open and expandable cast. While the Off-Broadway version had five actors, the show can accommodate up to 20. Ctrl-Art-Del has seven actors as part of their cast, playing a variety of roles. The cast is composed entirely of local talent, including renowned actors that are graduates of Haliburton Highlands Secondary School.

Every role was up for grabs for anybody, says Leis. With swapped character's genders, Leis says that the play allows for an interesting case study in power dynamics and gender roles.

The actors in *Dracula: A Comedy of Terrors* play out a comedic scene during their ongoing rehearsals in Minden. /THOMAS SMITH staff

Alex Kocot will be directing the show, a first for the longtime actor.

The show was selected in October of last year, with rehearsals starting around Feb. 12. With the play set in the 1890s, Leis says that they have had to make many of the costumes by hand.

"I love that we get to play with gender," said Leis. "It's a hilarious script."

Leis says the script takes influence from sources like Mel Brooks and Monty Python, with a splash of *Rocky Horror*. For every millennial that has grown up with vampire-filled media like *Twilight*, *Blade* and *Van Helsing* we are all familiar with the tropes, rules, and myths involved with vampires. All kinds of vampire fans are going to drink this play up.

For fans of Bram Stoker's novel, Carr says that the play stays surprisingly true to its original source.

"I have always loved *Dracula*," said Carr. "Putting my own spin on it will be the best."

"It stays true to the original and mirrors the original while bringing it to a contemporary mindset," said Leis.

In addition to the human cast, Leis says that there are a variety of puppets being made for the show. From animals to humans, Leis says that there will be "a lot of puppets."

"Come for a really good night of theater that is lighthearted, funny, and a lot of fun," said Leis.

Tickets are available to be purchased through Ctrl-Art-Del's website at tickets.ctrlartdel.ca. The play will be running from April 24 to 26 at the Northern Lights Performing Arts Pavilion. The show starts at 7:30 p.m.

Hal High Monthly

Hal High Monthly is written by the Haliburton Highlands Secondary School leadership class featuring monthy school news.

It was an eventful month at Hal High as we started a new semester and jumped back into classes. HHSS is almost a month into semester two, meaning that clubs have started up again after taking a break for exams, and many sports teams ended the season at full force as we are now transitioning into a new season.

There has been lots of excitement in sports at HHSS as our winter sports are wrapping up and spring sports are beginning. The senior girls volleyball team had been working and practicing hard since November when their season started. They had an exciting end to their season after they made it to COSSA (Central Ontario Secondary School Association) and played hard right up until the end.

The junior girls volleyball team, who had also been practicing since before Christmas, won their Kawartha Qualifying tournament, putting them in the perfect position to also place first at Kawarthas. After that, the team continued on to host COSSA at Hal High where they ended their season strong.

The junior boys basketball team just wrapped up an exciting season. After winning their Kawartha tournament, the boys continued on to COSSA where their long lasting season came to an end. Additionally, the senior boys basketball team played hard throughout their whole season. The team finished as finalists in the Kawartha tournament, qualifying them for COSSA where their season came to an end.

The Nordic skiing team went to OFSAA (Ontario Federation of School Athletic Association) earlier this month, where they had lots of success! Competing in pools of 150+ people, many HHSS students placed with fantastic scores. The OFSAA team consisted of 18 athletes, new and returning, from all grades.

Our wrestling team had various great matches in their COSSA tournament last month and will be sending two boys to the OFSAA tournament in early March! Students and coaches look forward to the upcoming spring sports season, including badminton, soccer, track, and rugby, which will be starting as soon as possible!

Clubs at HHSS are all back up and running after a brief break during exams. While most clubs are continuing on from last semester, the HHSS Drama Club had some exciting news: the club announced their spring show, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Auditions were held on Feb. 10 and 11, and the cast was announced three days later, on Feb.14. Director Rebeka Borgdorff (French and English teacher) and Assistant Directors/Stage Managers Christine Carr (French, English, and Leadership teacher) and Meghan Mardus (French and Drama teacher), with support from Tim Nicholson and Ella Leis from Ctrl-ART-Del, began blocking the show and preparing for the production. The team will work with students on developing their characters, on stepping outside of their comfort zones, and on their use of Shakespearian language. The cast will continue to work hard at rehearsals so that they are ready to perform their show at the end of May. Tickets will be available at the door on the production days.

With February including the Valentine's Day holiday, Elizabeth Mathew, Hal High's G7 student representative, ran Kindness Week earlier this month to celebrate encouraging and showing kindness to one another. This was an event that was run by G7 representatives at each of the Secondary schools in TLDSB. To celebrate Kindness Week, Elizabeth worked with the students of Hal High to write encouraging messages that were placed around the school as well as leading other kindness-inducing activities. In addition to Kindness Week, HHSS participated in Pink Shirt Day to promote anti-bullying, led by the Recreational Leadership Class.

With the start of a new semester, HHSS students are busy starting their new courses and getting back into the groove. We look forward to the new semester at HHSS with much excitement for what will come next!

By: Annabelle Borgdorff (Grade 12), Willow Brown (Grade 12), Dagon McIvor (Grade 12), Parker Pietryszyn (Grade 12), and Clarke Turner (Grade. 11)

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Creature Feature: The Barred Owl

by **RICK WHITTEKER**
Special to the Times

Their haunting nighttime call can either leave you spooked or in awe. This vocal bird will reply to even the most basic imitation of its call. Perhaps it is this unique connection with the Barred Owl that makes it one of the most fascinating year-round residents of Haliburton County.

Preferring older, dense and moist mixed forests, ideally with a river or wetlands nearby, the Barred Owl prefers to nest in tree cavities. One of many good reasons to not cut dead, standing trees whenever possible, they like to occupy large pileated woodpecker holes about 15 to 20 meters up in a tree. Barred Owls also use nesting boxes and are known to refurbish abandoned hawk, squirrel and crow nests to meet their needs.

With courtship starting in February, Barred Owls typically lay one to three eggs in mid to late winter. The female remains on the eggs while the male hunts. The female Barred Owl has evolved to be larger than its male partner, likely to help keep the developing embryos warm. The owlets crack through their shell about a month after they are hatched. Covered with white, fluffy down, they are so soft looking and cute enough that you might expect to find them featured in a toilet paper commercial!

Staying in the nest for up to six weeks, it is a full-time job for the parents to keep the owlets fed during this time. If they tumble out of the nest before they can fly, the juvenile birds can scamper up the trunk by digging their talons and bill into the bark while flapping their wings for balance so they can effectively walk their way back up the trunk.

Acute senses and soundless flight make the barred owl and formidable nighttime predator. Photo by Carol Moffatt

Animated owls in popular culture are often depicted as bespectacled and reflective, synonymous with wisdom and knowledge. A symbol of Athena, goddess of wisdom in Greek mythology, the saying, "as wise as an owl" likely arose from their calm, upright posture and large, round eyes with lids that close downward like humans rather than the bottom lids rising like most other birds.

Owl eyes are set flat on their face giving them binocular vision, the overlap of sight from each eye enhances their depth perception. The concentration of light sensitive rods in the retina gives them great night vision. However, their large eyes can't move in their sockets. To compensate for this, they can turn their heads 270 degrees and they can do it so fast that some have mistakenly suggested that they can spin their heads 360 degrees! The ability to swivel their heads like this is the result of having 14 vertebrae in their neck, twice as many as humans.

Nearby objects are blurry for owls but they don't give a hoot about that as it is their night vision combined with their acute hearing that make them adept hunters. The ears of the Barred Owl are large, skin and feather covered slits on the edges of the facial disc. They are not aligned symmetrically but are slightly offset from each other. The owl brain can interpret sound coming in from two different angles and can pinpoint the source with tremendous accuracy.

To test their acute hearing, studies conducted in total darkness found that owls were able to successfully hunt mice. Similarly, their razor-sharp hearing allows them to capture small rodents in their talons under a blanket of sound-muffling snow.

The bulk of their diet consists of small rodents but can also include young hares, shrews, frogs, snakes and small birds. They are even known to wade into rivers and creeks to catch crayfish and fish. With no teeth, they swallow their prey whole, the bones, fur, feathers, claws and bills are regurgitated instead of pooped out.

After eking out all available nutrients, the undigestible bits are stored in the upper gizzard or proventriculus before being coughed up through their mouth as a pellet. This process of expelling a pellet can take three to seven hours depending on the owl species and the size of the prey. Owls cannot eat again until this pellet is regurgitated as it blocks the digestive passage.

The concave facial disk of the barred owl helps to sense forest sounds better. Photo by Ed Poropat

Educational organizations collect and sterilize owl pellets. Piecing together the fine bone structure of rodents, birds and shrews found in them is like doing a bone puzzle, a unique and engaging learning experience. Using a pointed set of tweezers, tiny bone fragments can be teased out of the fur or feather-filled mass, however, it is the skulls found in these odourless pellets are the best identifier of the prey species.

If you are lucky enough to hear their "who cooks for you!" call resonating through the still, night air, take the time to marvel at the wonderful adaptations of this resident of our backyards, woodlots and forests. The Barred Owl, another fascinating wildlife species we share natural space with, enriching the experience of the visitors and residents of Haliburton County.

Sudoku brought to you by

SUDOKU

	2				8		6	7
3	9		6		5	1	2	
	4				1	5	3	
7							1	
2	5			1				
		9			2			3
		1		6				
5	6			8	4			
8	3					9	5	

Level: Beginner

Fun By The Numbers

Like puzzles? Then you'll love sudoku. This mind-bending puzzle will have you hooked from the moment you square off, so sharpen your pencil and put your sudoku savvy to the test!

Here's How It Works:
Sudoku puzzles are formatted as a 9x9 grid, broken down into nine 3x3 boxes. To solve a sudoku, the numbers 1 through 9 must fill each row, column and box. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and box. You can figure out the order in which the numbers will appear by using the numeric clues already provided in the boxes. The more numbers you name, the easier it gets to solve the puzzle!

Answers on page 15

Telling our stories

Our very own Tammy Rea is our guest on Wednesday evening, March 12 for the next Speakers Series event. Her presentation is titled "Vintage Video" - Haliburton Stories from in front and behind the camera. Tammy, along with her long-time colleague, Midori Nagai, spent 20 years with Sticks and Stones Productions recording and sharing stories about Haliburton County. Ms. Rea will take a look back at the stories and rich history around some of the videos that have been produced in Haliburton County, from the mysterious Highland Wheeler, to the comical and the poignant. Of course, who can forget (brrrr!) the outdoor screening of *There's Something in the Water?* in minus 25 degree weather! Enjoy an evening of looking back at the county's unique and colourful people and events, and some of the stories behind the stories brought to you by one of this community's truly gifted artists.

The Speakers Series, a member of the Haliburton County Community Cooperative, takes place on the second Wednesday of each month from 7 to 9 p.m. at the Haliburton Highlands Outdoor Association Fish Hatchery, 6712 Gelert Road. Admission is $15/person payable at the door or on line at www.tellingourstories.company.site.

As seating is limited, pre-registration is highly recommended. To obtain tickets, contact Barrie Martin at 705-457-7557 or by email at barrieinthehighlands@gmail.com

- Submitted

Lunch Is On Us…green edition!

Celebrate the luck of the Irish with SIRCH Community Services! Join us on Wednesday, March 12, from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the SIRCH Bistro & Bakery, 49 Maple Ave, Haliburton, for a free, hot, delicious Lunch Is On Us Event – bring your best green spirit!

Come dressed in your favorite green outfit– whether it's a pair of green shoes, a festive hat, or a whole outfit! Let's see you shine in your best St. Paddy's Day style!

As an added treat, enjoy live music entertainment by the talented Gord Kidd, setting the perfect mood for a lunch filled with Irish cheer and good vibes.

The winter months can feel isolating, but Lunch Is On Us is all about creating a warm, welcoming space where everyone can connect, share a meal, and spread kindness. It's a chance to make new friends and embrace the community around us – because this isn't just about food; it's about feeling at home and sharing joy.

Donations are always welcome but never required. Be sure to check out our social media pages for weekly updates on the menu and entertainment lineup for our Lunch Is On Us Event.

We can't wait to celebrate with you – see you on March 12!

If you're looking for more information, call SIRCH at 705-457-1742 or visit www.sirch.on.ca.

- Submitted

Community Coffee House focuses on a key to healthy aging

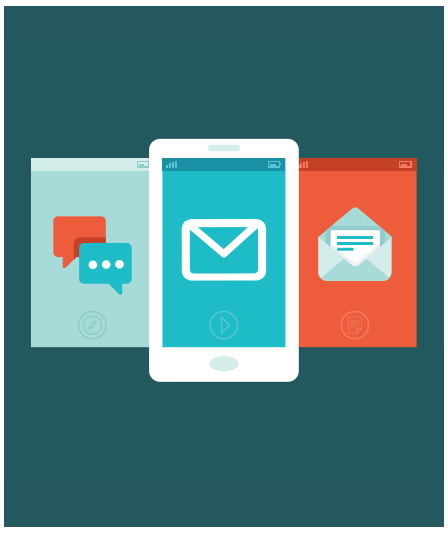
Are you interested in learning about a few simple changes you could make to improve your quality of life? Dr. Norm Bottum of the Haliburton Family Medical Centre will discuss metabolic flexibility, the features of good metabolic health, and how we can make changes in this area to improve this aspect of our health at an upcoming Community Coffee House to be held Tuesday, March 18 at 7 p.m. in the Schofield Room of the Haliburton Legion.

Our musical guests, local musicians Brian Sachs and Peter Smith, will begin the evening with Celtic, folk and modern uplifting pieces.

This is one of a monthly series of meetings of topics related to making our communities better — and one way of doing that is to learn how we can help ourselves and others to be healthier members of these communities. Previous presentations under this heading have included Finding One's Own Power to be a source for change in our communities, The Power of One related to the environment, Creating Places of Support in the field of Youth Mental Health and Social Media, Supporting our Youth in Challenging Times, and Addictions.

These gatherings are free of charge, open to all, with light refreshments available, and are hosted by the Baha'is of Haliburton to provide a place for safe and healthy discussion on issues of interest in the support and building of community.

-Submitted



Have a thought, comment or opinion you'd like to share?

Send a letter to the editor to
emily@haliburtonpress.com

Township of Algonquin Highlands

PUBLIC NOTICE
Applicant(s): Williams & Loat
Lot 27, Concession 6, Maple Lake
Geographic Township of Stanhope

WHEREAS the Council of the Corporation of the Township of Algonquin Highlands has declared part of the original shore road allowance lying in front of Lot 27, Concession 6, Maple Lake, in the geographic Township of Stanhope, in the Township of Algonquin Highlands, County of Haliburton, to be surplus.

TAKE NOTICE that the Council of the Municipal Corporation of the Township of Algonquin Highlands proposes to enact a By-Law to stop-up, close and convey to the abutting property owner(s) that part of the original shore road allowance lying in front of Lot 27, Concession 6, described as all and singular that certain parcel or tract of land and premises situate, lying and being in the Geographic Township of Stanhope, in the County of Haliburton and being composed of the following:

FIRSTLY: THAT part of the original shore road allowance lying in front of Lot 27, Concession 6, described as Parts 1 & 2 on a Plan deposited in the Registry Office for the Registry Division of Haliburton County as Plan 19R-11058.

The proposed By-Law will come before the said Council for consideration at its regular meeting at the Algonquin Highlands Municipal Office, 1123 North Shore Road, on the 20th day of March, 2025 and at that time, the Council will hear in person or by his/her counsel, solicitor or agent any person who claims that his/her land will be prejudicially affected and who applies to be heard. Any person who wishes to be heard by Council regarding this proposed closure must contact the Clerk to schedule a delegation with Council.

Dated: March 5th 2025

Sean O'Callaghan
Planner
Township of Algonquin Highlands
1123 North Shore Rd.
Algonquin Highlands, ON K0M 1S0
Tel: (705) 489-2379
Email: socallaghan@algonquinhighlands.ca

Township of Algonquin Highlands

PUBLIC NOTICE
Applicant(s): Bassler
Lot 5, Concession 2, Kushog Lake
Geographic Township of Stanhope

WHEREAS the Council of the Corporation of the Township of Algonquin Highlands has declared part of the original shore road allowance lying in front of Lot 5, Concession 2, Kushog Lake, in the geographic Township of Stanhope, in the Township of Algonquin Highlands, County of Haliburton, to be surplus.

TAKE NOTICE that the Council of the Municipal Corporation of the Township of Algonquin Highlands proposes to enact a By-Law to stop-up, close and convey to the abutting property owner(s) that part of the original shore road allowance lying in front of Lot 5, Concession 2, described as all and singular that certain parcel or tract of land and premises situate, lying and being in the Geographic Township of Stanhope, in the County of Haliburton and being composed of the following:

FIRSTLY: THAT part of the original shore road allowance lying in front of Lot 5, Concession 2, described as Part 1 on a Plan deposited in the Registry Office for the Registry Division of Haliburton County as Plan 19R-11062.

The proposed By-Law will come before the said Council for consideration at its regular meeting at the Algonquin Highlands Municipal Office, 1123 North Shore Road, on the 20th day of March, 2025 and at that time, the Council will hear in person or by his/her counsel, solicitor or agent any person who claims that his/her land will be prejudicially affected and who applies to be heard. Any person who wishes to be heard by Council regarding this proposed closure must contact the Clerk to schedule a delegation with Council.

Dated: March 5th 2025

Sean O'Callaghan
Planner
Township of Algonquin Highlands
1123 North Shore Rd.
Algonquin Highlands, ON K0M 1S0
Tel: (705) 489-2379
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HCDC celebrates 10 Years of its Local Initiatives Program

Local Not-for-Profit and Community Organizations are welcome to apply to the Haliburton County Development Corporation's Local Initiatives Program (LIP).

Now entering its 10th year, LIP funding has been a catalyst for extraordinary community led initiatives across the Haliburton Highlands. From April 2015 to February 2025, LIP has now distributed over $615,000 with an overall community impact of $2,484,398. The goal of LIP funding is to strengthen our community by supporting projects that are incremental (new initiatives or enhancements/additions to existing activities) and strive to enhance the resiliency and vibrancy of the Haliburton Highlands.

"The Local Initiatives Program has played a pivotal role in supporting local not-for-profit organizations and economic growth in our communities across the Haliburton Highlands. By providing our communities with the resources they need to thrive, we are fostering economic growth at the local level," said the Honourable Ruby Sahota, Minister of Democratic Institutions and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario.

Groups such as The Sculpture Forest, Razzamataz Kids' Shows, and the Volunteer Dental Outreach have all been recipients of LIP funding. "LIP funding has been extremely helpful in funding Razzamataz Kids' Shows! initiatives in the community. With this support, we continue to bring high-quality, affordable and culturally diverse theatre and workshops to children and families across the County," says Nicole Stewart, chair of Razzamataz Kids' Shows. LIP funds are also used to leverage additional dollars for larger scale projects, accessed by organizations such as the Haliburton Highlands Arts Centre Foundation and The Haliburton Sports Hall of Fame.

The Local Initiatives Program funds important community conversations such as Housing Summits, the Teeny Tiny Summit, Local Food Networking and Environmental roundtables. "Central Food Network is grateful to HCDC and the LIP Program for investing in community resilience and vibrancy. We see firsthand how LIP support empowers local initiatives like ours that strengthen the Haliburton Highlands region in diverse and wonderful ways, creating lasting impact through dozens of meaningful community projects each year," says Tina Jackson, Executive Director of the Central Food Network. For the last decade, LIP funding has engaged almost 500 partners and leveraged over one million dollars since its inception. While mandated to do community economic development, HCDC is not funded to do so and has innovatively self-funded the Local Initiatives program through interest earned from its lending activities. Community Economic Development (CED) positively impacts Haliburton County's large not-for-profit sector.

Additionally, HCDC is known to create specialized programs to assist Haliburton County Businesses and Organizations at a time when a state of emergency or a natural disaster impacts our community. In 2020 HCDC created the LIP COVID Edition to support not-for profit organizations affected adversely by the pandemic. The program covered new expenses to respond to COVID-19 protocols or to assist with fixed operating costs, which could not be covered due to loss of revenue.

LIP applications are due March 11, 2025. HCDC is pleased to provide feedback and support for application development. Please visit our website for more information on eligibility and the application process.

The Haliburton County Development Corporation is supported by the Government of Canada through the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario (FedDev Ontario).

-Submitted

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7	8	6	4	3	9	2	1	5
2	5	3	8	1	6	7	9	4
4	1	9	7	5	2	6	8	3
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5	6	2	9	8	4	3	7	1
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Haliburton County Public Library is currently recruiting for a Communications Coordinator
This part-time position (28 hours per week) develops and implements strategies to increase the community's engagement with library services and provides admin assistance. Hourly wage range is $32.29 - $37.77.

Applications
Visit our website at www.haliburtoncounty.ca/careers for detailed postings and job descriptions.
Forward your resume to shume@haliburtoncounty.ca no later than **March 10, 2025.**

We thank all who apply for this position; however only those selected for an interview will be contacted. The County of Haliburton is an equal employer. Accommodation can be provided in all steps of the hiring process, please contact Human Resources for further details. In accordance with the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, the information gathered will be used solely for the purpose of job selection.

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(Hint: 6 = E)

A. 20 18 11 22 21 26 7 22 18 25 3
Clue: Draws attention away

B. 17 6 9 18 7 4 6
Clue: Car or truck

C. 21 25 26 20
Clue: Place to drive

D. 6 13 6 11
Clue: Used for sight

Answers: A. distraction B. vehicle C. road D. eyes

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Starting in July

Doctor signs with Lions Clinic

A new doctor will be joining the staff of the Minden Lions Medical Clinic.

Spokesman Daryl Moore announced February 19 that Dr. Judith Smith has signed a contract and will begin practising in July.

Dr. Smith, who is currently completing her medical degree at McMaster University in Hamilton, worked as a Registered Nurse for 17 years before returning to university to obtain her medical degree. She expects to graduate with the spring convocation and will immediately begin her practice in Minden.

According to Moore, the doctor has signed a three year contract with the clinic.

Dr. Smith visited the community late last year after responding to advertisements placed by the Community Committee for Physicians (CCFP). After touring the hospital, the clinic and the community she advised that she wished to join the staff and returned briefly to the village last week to sign the contract.

While the Community Committee has hosted a number of visiting doctors over the past six months, Smith is the first to have signed a contract. Her addition to the Minden medical roster will help ease the shortage in doctors that the community has experienced since last summer. It is also hoped that her willingness to sign will lead to other doctors joining the staff.

The announcement was welcomed by Anson, Hindon and Minden Reeve Jeanne Anthon and CCFP chairman Jack Brezina. Both the council and the committee, in cooperation with the clinic, have been working hard to encourage doctors to practise in Minden.

Emergency feeding under way

The Haliburton Highlands Outdoors Association (HHOA), in co-operation with the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters (OFAH) and the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR), is co-ordinating the emergency feeding program for white-tailed deer herds in Haliburton County. The heavy snowfalls and extremely cold temperatures that have been experienced over the past few months have depleted the natural fat stocks the animals build up leading into winter, creating a necessity for the implementation of an emergency feeding plan. The photo above was taken near one of the HHOA feeding stations. For more on what is being done to help the deer herd in Haliburton County, see page 19.

Fire departments to train for ice/water rescues

by Andrew Milne

Haliburton county fire departments may be trained and equipped for full immersion ice and water rescues as early as next winter.

Ontario's Fire Marshall's Office (FMO) says it expects to be able to provide a 'Train the Trainer' program to interested departments this spring. That greatly reduces the cost to departments interested in doing the rescues.

Stanhope fire chief Bob Pollard confirmed last week that he expects to be writing the costs of the training and equipment into his upcoming department budget. "Whether or not council will accept it I don't know."

Minden chief Bill Hogg confirms that Minden also expects to be taking the program and equipping for the rescues. Anson, Hindon and Minden council, he says, has been quite supportive of the initiative.

Currently, Haliburton county departments are not equipped, insured or trained for rescues that involve going beyond shore. That means anyone who gets in trouble more than about 75 feet off shore is out of reach. No other rescue services capable of responding to such calls exist in Haliburton county, a situation not uncommon in rural areas.

Rural fire departments often wind up doing the rescues because of their relatively fast response time, but Haliburton county departments had been forbidden from attempting any ice or water rescues from 1992 — when the county passed a resolution that municipal councils forbid them from doing so — until last year, when they started doing the shore-based rescues again.

It's a long story how that happened. The resolution was passed in the wake of a 1990 incident in Port Carling in which a firefighter drowned, and the department was sued by the Ministry of Labour for violations of Occupational Health and Safety Standards. The case was dismissed, but not before a lot of jurisdictions were convinced that getting involved in the rescues was beyond their means.

The politics were complicated as well — the MOL's position wasn't that departments should be involved in the rescues, but that they should be properly trained, equipped and insured for them. However ,some councils took the position that this was a case of downloading, and that departments shouldn't be involved in the rescues in the first place.

In de facto terms, however, that left much of the area entirely without services to deal with such emergencies.

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Hours may still be reduced

Hospital grant cuts modest

by Andrew Milne

Provincial grants to Minden and Haliburton hospitals will be cut by $69,000 for the coming year.

The cut, which represents about 2.5 percent of the total Ministry of Health (MOH) grant, is on the low end of what the local board had been led to expect from the government.

Haliburton Highlands Health Board (HHHB) finance committee chair Hugh Nichol said Saturday that though the relatively shallow cut was a relief, "It's still a cut."

The board had been told to expect cuts between 2.5 percent and eight percent of the grant.

The news does not necessarily mean any change in operating hours at Minden hospital or at Haliburton hospital in the coming year, but it may. *The Times* was told Saturday some board members are still considering the possibility of reducing Minden's hours to eight hours, while others are arguing that they should be increased beyond the current twelve per day.

The board has recently completed a role study which concluded 24 hour operation at both Minden and Haliburton sites is not supported by patient traffic. Executive director Foster Loucks said at the time he expected the board would continue to operate Minden hospital at reduced hours for the foreseeable future.

The board had met Friday evening to discuss measures to reduce a projected operating deficit, but was unable to come

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